

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00984 151052Z
ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0984

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR IZ US
SUBJECT: U.S. - IRAQI RELATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 948

1. COLLEAGUES IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS TELL US THAT IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS CAUTIOUSLY MOVING TOWARD RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH THE USG. MOST RECENT EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THEIR BELIEF WAS THE ATTENDANCE OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, THE DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS, AT RECEPTION GIVEN BY ACTING PRINCIPAL OFFICER ON JUNE 11. RECEPTION WAS AT PRINCIPAL OFFICER'S RESIDENCE, UNTIL NOW CONSIDERED OFF LIMITS FOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS. DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES GREETED WITH KNOWING SMILES OUR GENUINE BUT PLEASED SURPRISE.

2. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR BARAKAT ASKED ME TO VISIT HIS OFFICE ON JUNE 12. HE THEN REPORTED ON CONVERSATION HE HAD THAT MORNING WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY ABDUL MALIK AL-YASSIM RE U.S.-IRAQI RELATIONS. YASSIN'S RESPONSES TO BARAKAT'S GENTLE PRODDING DID NOT REVEAL ANY PARTICULAR SHIFT IN IRQI POSITION, BUT BARAKAT CAME AWAY WITH BELIEF THAT SUBJECT IS UNDER CLOSE
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CONSIDERATION. IN BARAKAT'S VIEW, ONE FACTOR WHICH MAY DELAY IRAQI REACTION TO RECENT U.S. INITIATIVES IS SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CONTINUED HALF-TIME SCHEDULE AND RESULTANT TENDENCY OF IRAQI OFFICIALS TO POSTPONE IMPORTANT DECISIONS REQUIRING HIS GUIDANCE.

3. COMMENT: IRAQIS NATURALLY PREFER TO MOVE AT THEIR OWN

PACE IN THIS PROCESS. I BELIEVE THEY FEEL THAT NEXT STEP SHOULD COME FROM BAGHDAD. THEY WILL WISH TO CHOOSE THE TIMING RATHER THAN BEING COMPELLED TO REACT TO ANY USG GESTURE WHICH MIGHT SEEM TOO DRAMATIC. ESPECIALLY AT A PERIOD WHEN THE IRAQIS HAVE INTERNAL DECISION-MAKING PROBLEMS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT CROWD THEM. I ALSO BELIEVE IT IS TACTICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO CONVEY IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE FOR THE TIME BEING SATISFIED WITH PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS WHICH ENABLE US TO ADVANCE OUR COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL INTERESTS. IT IS, AFTER ALL, IRAQIS WHO STAND TO GAIN MOST BY BREAKING OUT OF THEIR SELF-IMPOSED POLITICAL ISOLATION AND ESTABLISHING FREER AND HIGHER LEVEL DIALOGUE WITH A GREAT POWER.
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